



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

the
Poetry, American

BOSTON, 135 WASHINGTON STREET,
SEPTEMBER, 1851.

NEW BOOKS AND NEW EDITIONS
PUBLISHED BY
TICKNOR, REED, AND FIELDS.

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW'S WRITINGS.

THE GOLDEN LEGEND. A Mystery. Price \$1.00.

POETICAL WORKS. This edition contains the six Volumes mentioned below, and is the only complete collection in the market.
In two volumes, 16mo. \$2.00.

In separate Volumes, each 75 cents.

VOICES OF THE NIGHT.

BALLADS AND OTHER POEMS.

SPANISH STUDENT; A PLAY IN THREE ACTS.

BELFREY OF BRUGES, AND OTHER POEMS.

EVANGELINE; A TALE OF ACADIE.

THE SEASIDE AND THE FIRESIDE.

THE WAIF. A Collection of Poems. Edited by Longfellow.

THE ESTRAY. A Collection of Poems. Edited by Longfellow.

MR. LONGFELLOW'S PROSE WORKS.

HYPERION. A ROMANCE. Price \$1.00.

OUTRE-MER. A PILGRIMAGE. Price \$1.00.

KAVANAGH. A TALE. Price 75 cents.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S WRITINGS.

TWICE-TOLD TALES. Two Volumes. Price \$1.50.

THE SCARLET LETTER. Price 75 cents.

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES. Price \$1.00.

TRUE STORIES FROM HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY.
With fine Engravings. Price 75 cents.

A WONDER BOOK FOR BOYS AND GIRLS. With fine
Engravings. Price 75 cents.

NBI

Lowell

JOHN G. WHITTIER'S WRITINGS.

OLD PORTRAITS AND MODERN SKETCHES. Price 75 cents.

MARGARET SMITH'S JOURNAL. Price 75 cents.

SONGS OF LABOR, AND OTHER POEMS. Price 50 cts.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES'S WRITINGS.

POETICAL WORKS. With fine Portrait. Price \$1.00.

ASTRÆA. Price 25 cents.

ALFRED TENNYSON'S WRITINGS.

POETICAL WORKS. With Portrait. 2 vols. Price \$1.50.

THE PRINCESS. Price 50 cents.

IN MEMORIAM. Price 75 cents.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS.

CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER, AND
SUSPIRIA DE PROFUNDIS. Price 75 cents.

BIOGRAPHICAL ESSAYS. Price 75 cents.

MISCELLANEOUS ESSAYS. Price 75 cents.

THE CÆSARS. Price 75 cents.

LIFE AND MANNERS. Price 75 cents.

LITERARY REMINISCENCES. 2 Vols. Price \$1.50.

GRACE GREENWOOD'S WRITINGS.

GREENWOOD LEAVES. 1st & 2d Series. Price \$1.25 each.

POETICAL WORKS. With fine Portrait. Price 75 cents.

HISTORY OF MY PETS. With fine Engravings. Price 50 cents.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MY CHILDHOOD. With fine Engravings.

EDWIN P. WHIPPLE'S WRITINGS.

ESSAYS AND REVIEWS. 2 Vols. Price \$2.00.

LECTURES ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH LITERATURE AND LIFE. Price 63 cents.

WASHINGTON AND THE REVOLUTION. Price 20 cts.

HENRY GILES'S WRITINGS.

LECTURES, ESSAYS, AND MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS. 2 Vols. Price \$1.50.

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT ON LIFE. Price 75 cents.

WILLIAM MOTHERWELL'S WRITINGS.

POEMS, NARRATIVE AND LYRICAL. Price 75 cents.

POSTHUMOUS POEMS. Price 50 cents.

MINSTRELSY, ANCIENT AND MODERN. 2 Vols. Price \$1.50.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL'S WRITINGS.

COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS. Revised, with Additions.
In two volumes, 16mo. Price \$1.50.

SIR LAUNFAL. Price 25 cents.

MISCELLANEOUS.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S BIOGRAPHY. By Dr. C. WORDSWORTH. 2 Vols. Price \$2.50.

ROBERT BROWNING. COMPLETE POETICAL WORKS, 2 Vols.
Price \$2.00.

BARRY CORNWALL. ENGLISH SONGS AND OTHER SMALL
POEMS. Enlarged Edition. \$1.00.

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES. POEMS OF MANY YEARS.
Price 75 cents.

PHILLIP JAMES BAILEY. THE ANGEL WORLD AND OTHER
POEMS. Price 50 cents.

GOETHE'S WILHELM MEISTER. Translated by CAR-
LYLE. 2 Vols. Price \$2.50.

GOETHE'S FAUST. Price 75 cents.

CHARLES SPRAGUE. POETICAL AND PROSE WRITINGS. With fine Portrait. Price 75 cents.

CHARLES SUMNER. ORATIONS AND SPEECHES. 2 Vols. Price \$2.50.

GEORGE S. HILLARD. THE DANGERS AND DUTIES OF THE MERCANTILE PROFESSION. Price 25 cents.

HORACE MANN. A FEW THOUGHTS FOR A YOUNG MAN. Price 25 cents.

HENRY T. TUCKERMAN. POEMS. Price 75 cents.

F. W. P. GREENWOOD. SERMONS OF CONSOLATION. Price \$1.00.

BAYARD TAYLOR. POEMS. (Nearly ready.)

R. H. STODDARD. POEMS. (Nearly ready.)

JOHN G. SAXE. POEMS. Price 50 cents.

REJECTED ADDRESSES. By HORACE and JAMES SMITH. Price 50 cents.

WARRENIANA. By the Authors of Rejected Addresses. Price 63 cents.

MEMORY AND HOPE. A BOOK OF POEMS, REFERRING TO CHILDHOOD. Price \$2.00.

ALDERBROOK. By FANNY FORESTER. 2 Vols. Price \$1.75.

HEROINES OF THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE. Price 75 cents.

MEMOIR OF THE BUCKMINSTERS, FATHER AND SON. By Mrs. LEE. \$1.25.

THE SOLITARY OF JUAN FERNANDEZ. By the Author of Picciola. Price 50 cents.

THE BOSTON BOOK. Price \$1.25.

ANGEL-VOICES. Price 38 cents.

FLORENCE, AND OTHER TALES. By Mrs. LEE.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY. (Nearly ready.)

EACH OF THE ABOVE POEMS AND PROSE WRITINGS, MAY BE HAD IN VARIOUS STYLES OF HANDSOME BINDING.

And I am sure you will find
it all the more interesting

And I am sure you will find
it all the more interesting







Mary Norton Smith
April 14th 52

THE VISION

OF

Sir Launfal.

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

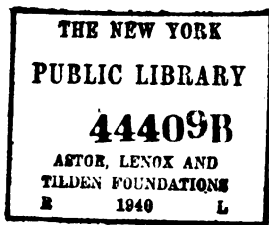
FOURTH EDITION.

L.C.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR, REED, AND FIELDS.

M DCCC LI.

41.6\



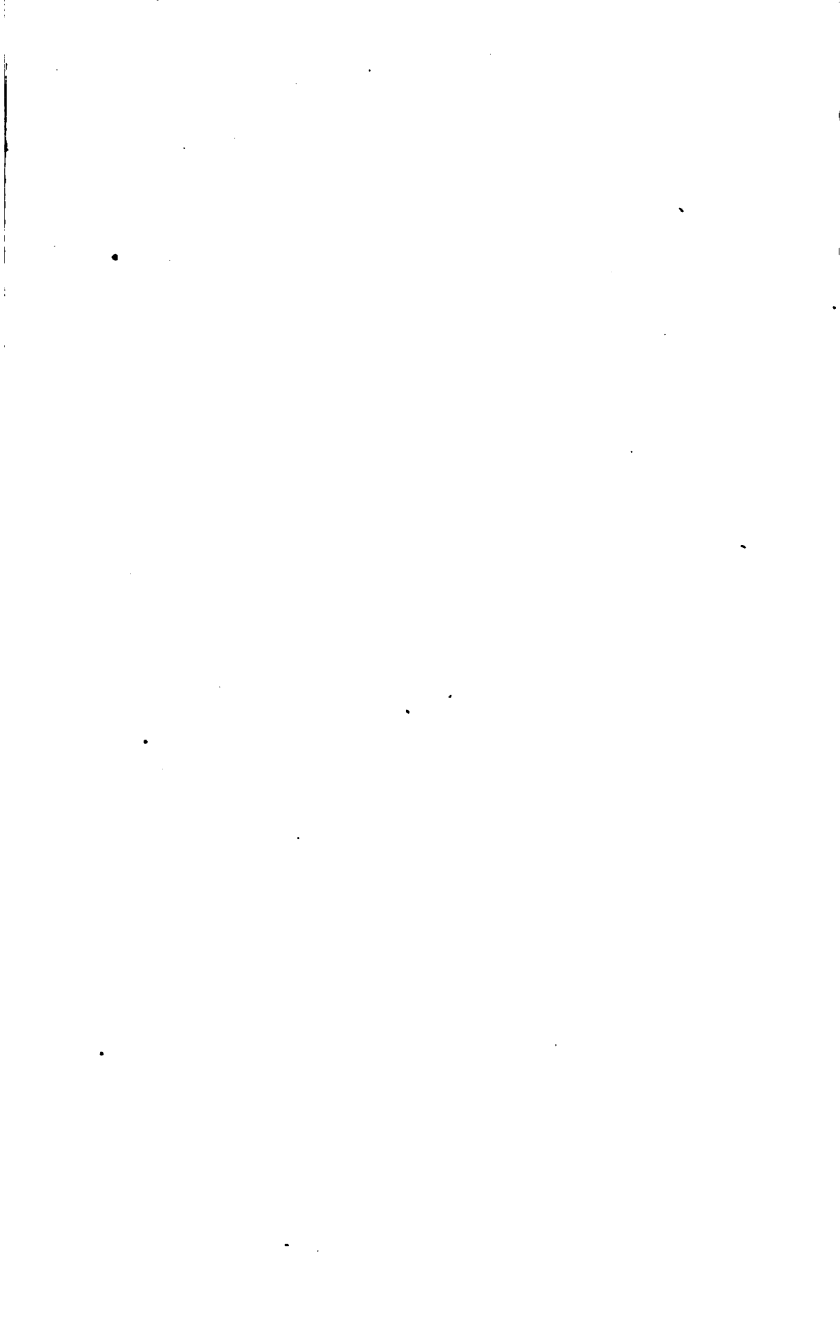
Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1948, by
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

CAMBRIDGE:
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY
METCALF AND COMPANY,
PRINTERS TO THE UNIVERSITY.

NOTE.

ACCORDING to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus partook of the last supper with his disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed ; but one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favorite enterprise of the knights of Arthur's court to go in search of it. Sir Galahad was at last successful in finding it, as may be read in the seventeenth book of the Romance of King Arthur. Tennyson has made Sir Galahad the subject of one of the most exquisite of his poems.

The plot (if I may give that name to any thing so slight) of the following poem is my own, and, to serve its purposes, I have enlarged the circle of competition in search of the miraculous cup in such a manner as to include, not only other persons than the heroes of the Round Table, but also a period of time subsequent to the date of King Arthur's reign.



THE VISION
OF
Sir Launfal.

PART FIRST.



PRELUDE.

OVER his keys the musing organist,
Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they list,
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay ;
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent
Along the wavering vista of his dream.

Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie ;
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
We Sinais climb and know it not ;

Over our manhood bend the skies ;
Against our fallen and traitor lives
The great winds utter prophecies ;
With our faint hearts the mountain strives ;
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood
Waits with its benedicite ;
And to our age's drowsy blood
Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us ;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
We bargain for the graves we lie in ;
At the Devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold ;
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we earn with a whole soul's tasking :
'T is heaven alone that is given away,
'T is only God may be had for the asking ;
There is no price set on the lavish summer,
And June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June ?

Then, if ever, come perfect days ;

Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,

And over it softly her warm ear lays :

Whether we look, or whether we listen,

We hear life murmur, or see it glisten ;

Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches and towers,

And, grasping blindly above it for light,

Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers ;

The flush of life may well be seen

Thrilling back over hills and valleys ;

The cowslip startles in meadows green,

The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,

And there 's never a leaf or a blade too mean

To be some happy creature's palace ;

The little bird sits at his door in the sun,

Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,

And lets his illumined being o'errun

With the deluge of summer it receives ;

His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,

And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings ;

He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest, —
In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best ?

Now is the high-tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbd away
Comes flooding back, with a ripply cheer,
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay ;
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
We are happy now because God so wills it ;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'T is enough for us now that the leaves are green ;
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell ;
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is growing ;
The breeze comes whispering in our ear,
That dandelions are blossoming near,
That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house hard by ;
And if the breeze kept the good news back,
For other couriers we should not lack ;

We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing, —
And hark ! how clear bold chanticleer,
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
Tells all in his lusty crowing !

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how ;
Every thing is happy now,

Every thing is upward striving ;

'T is as easy now for the heart to be true

As for grass to be green or skies to be blue, —

'T is the natural way of living :

Who knows whither the clouds have fled ?

In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake ;

And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,

The heart forgets its sorrow and ache ;

The soul partakes the season's youth,

And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe

Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,

Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.

What wonder if Sir Launfal now

Remembered the keeping of his vow ?

PART FIRST.

I.

“MY golden spurs now bring to me,
And bring to me my richest mail,
For to-morrow I go over land and sea
In search of the Holy Grail ;
Shall never a bed for me be spread,
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
Till I begin my vow to keep ;
Here on the rushes will I sleep,
And perchance there may come a vision true
Ere day create the world anew.”

Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
And into his soul the vision flew.

II.

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees,
The little birds sang as if it were
The one day of summer in all the year,
And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees :
The castle alone in the landscape lay
Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray ;
'T was the proudest hall in the North Countree,
And never its gates might opened be,
Save to lord or lady of high degree ;
Summer besieged it on every side,
But the churlish stone her assaults defied ;
She could not scale the chilly wall,
Though round it for leagues her pavilions tall
Stretched left and right,
Over the hills and out of sight ;
Green and broad was every tent,
And out of each a murmur went
Till the breeze fell off at night.

III.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
And through the dark arch a charger sprang,
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all
Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall
In his siege of three hundred summers long,
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,
Had cast them forth : so, young and strong,
And lightsome as a locust-leaf,
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail,
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

IV.

It was morning on hill and stream and tree,
And morning in the young knight's heart ;
Only the castle moodily
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,
And gloomed by itself apart ;

The season brimmed all other things up
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

V.

As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome gate,
He was ware of a leper, crouched by the same,
Who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate ;
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came,
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armor did shrink and crawl,
And midway its leap his heart stood still
Like a frozen waterfall ;
For this man, so foul and bent of stature,
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the summer morn, —
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

VI.

The leper raised not the gold from the dust :
“ Better to me the poor man's crust,
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his door ;

That is no true alms which the hand can hold ;
He gives nothing but worthless gold
 Who gives from a sense of duty ;
But he who gives a slender mite,
And gives to that which is out of sight,
 That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all unite, —
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it store
To the soul that was starving in darkness before.”

THE VISION
OF
Sir Launfal.



PART SECOND.



PRELUDE.

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand summers old ;
On open wold and hill-top bleak
It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek ;
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare ;
The little brook heard it and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof ;
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined his arches and matched his beams ;
Slender and clear were his crystal spars
As the lashes of light that trim the stars ;

He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight ;
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt,
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees
Bending to counterfeit a breeze ;
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
But silvery mosses that downward grew ;
Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf ;
Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear
For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and here
He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
And hung them thickly with diamond drops,
Which crystallised the beams of moon and sun,
And made a star of every one :
No mortal builder's most rare device
Could match this winter-palace of ice ;
'T was as if every image that mirrored lay
In his depths serene through the summer day,
Each flitting shadow of earth and sky,
Lest the happy model should be lost,

- Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
By the elfin builders of the frost.

Within the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas glow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
With the lightsome green of ivy and holly ;
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide ;
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind ;
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
Hunted to death in its galleries blind ;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
Like herds of startled deer.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,
And rattles and wrings
The icy strings,

Singing, in dreary monotone,
A Christmas carol of its own,
Whose burden still, as he might guess,
Was — “ Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless ! ”

The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night
The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
Through the window-slits of the castle old,
Build out its piers of ruddy light
Against the drift of the cold.

PART SECOND.



I.

THERE was never a leaf on bush or tree,
That bare boughs rattled shudderingly ;
The river was dumb and could not speak,
For the frost's swift shuttles its shroud had spun ;
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun ;
Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitley .
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

II.

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate,
For another heir in his earldom sate ;
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail ;
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross,
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III.

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,
For it was just at the Christmas time ;
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
In the light and warmth of long ago ;
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl
O'er the edge of the desert, black and small,
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,
He can count the camels in the sun,

As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,
The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade,
And with its own self like an infant played,
And waved its signal of palms.

IV.

“ For Christ’s sweet sake, I beg an alms ” ; —
The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees naught save the grewsome thing,
The leper, lank as the rain-blanchèd bone,
That cowered beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas
In the desolate horror of his disease.

V.

And Sir Launfal said, — “ I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree ;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns, —
Thou also hast had the world’s buffets and scorns, —
And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side :

Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me ;
Behold, through him, I give to thee !”

VI.

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he
Remembered in what a haughtier guise
He had flung an alms to leprosie,
When he caged his young life up in gilded mail
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.
The heart within him was ashes and dust ;
He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink ;
'T was a mouldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'T was water out of a wooden bowl,—
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 't was red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

VII.

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place ;

The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, —
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.

VIII.

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
Which mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was calmer than silence said,
“Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
Behold, it is here, — this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need, —

Not that which we give, but what we share, —
For the gift without the giver is bare ;
Who bestows himself with his alms feeds three, —
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

IX.

Sir Launfal awoke, as from a swoond : —
" The Grail in my castle here is found !
Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
Let it be the spider's banquet-hall ;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail."

X.

The castle-gate stands open now,
And the wanderer is welcome to the hall
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough ;
No longer scowl the turrets tall,
The Summer's long siege at last is o'er ;
When the first poor outcast went in at the door,
She entered with him in disguise,
And mastered the fortress by surprise ;

There is no spot she loves so well on ground,
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round ;
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
Has hall and bower at his command ;
And there 's no poor man in the North Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.



